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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

MARCH 2000

## MARCH HAPPENINGS

The March meeting of the Hancock County Historical Society will be held on Thursday, March 16 at the Kate Lobrano House, 108 Cue Street, Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi.

Our program will be conducted by Alvin Bourgeois of the Hancock County Vocational Technical Training Center. The center is under the auspices of the Hancock County School District. Mr. Bourgeois will describe and demonstrate some of the programs that are available, both to students and adults.

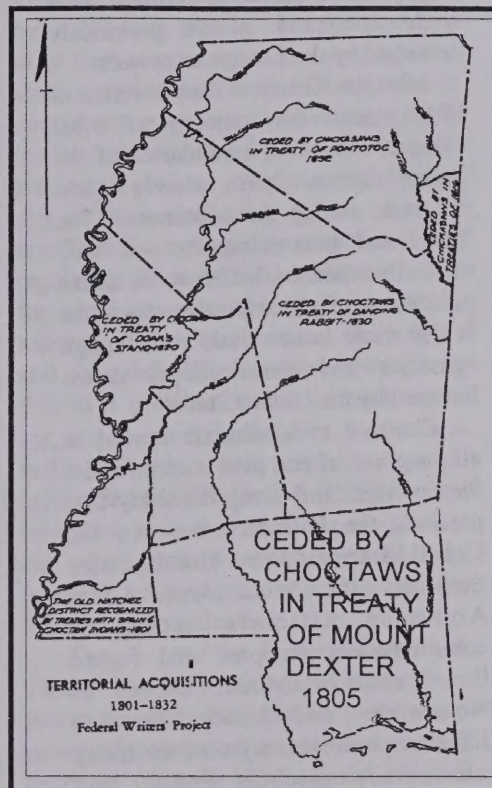
Please call early for lunch reservations at \$6.00. Our seating capacity is sixty. Please be one of them.

## SOCIETY NEWS

We have excellent news to report regarding volunteers at the Lobrano House. We logged 349 hours in February. To those of you who have not come down to help us yet, we are having fun without you, but I would bet that it would be more fun with you.

So far, we have made new file folders for all the "surname" files and have arranged their contents in chronological order. And, we have begun working on the "subject" files which are considerably more numerous.

We also have a volunteer who will continue our project of photographing every house in Hancock County. Please call or just drop by anytime during regular office hours.



This map shows various treaties with Indian Nations in the Mississippi Territory following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

The Mount Dexter treaty in 1805 with the Choctaws included all of present-day Hancock County.

In the treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830, the Choctaw nation ceded the remainder of their lands east of the Mississippi.

Map courtesy of MISSISSIPPI, A GUIDE TO THE MAGNOLIA STATE - Works Progress Administration 1938.

## TREATY OF MOUNT DEXTER, 1805

The best known treaty between the Choctaw Indians and the United States government is the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, also called the third Choctaw cession, signed in 1830.

The lesser known first Choctaw session, signed by tribal leaders in 1805 at Mount Dexter in Mississippi Territory, promises the student of Indian history some answers to pertinent questions.

Comprising a vast rectangular area of pine barrens stretching roughly 150 miles along the thirty-first parallel from the Natchez district to the highlands between the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers above

Mobile, this land acquisition gave the United States a buffer zone approximately fifty miles deep along the frontier with Spanish West Florida and ties together the isolated areas of Natchez and the Tombigbee settlements in present-day Alabama. The treaty also signalled a marked change in federal Indian policy from appeasement to acquisition of Indian land. The shift was subtle as well as complex, befitting its major architect, Thomas Jefferson.

One of the most pervasive theories of American Indian history is that "land greed" spurred even the early cessions along the frontiers of the United States. Indeed, many historians blame the whole



of nineteenth-century Indian policy, including removal, upon the cupidity and avarice of settlers rushing in to acquire real estate. Following the trauma of the Creek War, there is a great body of evidence that indicates that American reaction to international pressures caused the earliest Indian cessions along the southern frontier.

This pre-War of 1812 period includes the time of the United States' **greatest territorial growth as well as** the era of Napoleonic wars, when intense European competition severely threatened the continued existence of the fledgling nation. When Thomas Jefferson assumed the presidency in 1801, the American republic stood virtually defenseless against the more powerful European nations.

Believing that a large standing army threatened citizens and drained treasuries, Jefferson relied on the ability of a quickly responding militia to defend the nation. Consequently, the president formed his defense policies around the central requisite of a large yeomanry from which a militia could be called. And in order to attract the yeomanry, land had to be available - land that in many cases was still Indian country and thus not open to settlers.

During Jefferson's presidential tenure, from 1801 to 1809, he tried continuously to acquire Indian land for defensive purposes - although in some instances land was already available but lacked settlers to complete the defensive militia concept. Immediately prior to the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, he reacted to the possible French takeover of that territory by stating to congress that "reflective of the late occurrences on the Mississippi," the nation needed "country on that river, from our southern border to the Illinois, so that we may present as firm a front as on our eastern border." he was keenly aware that much of the land mentioned lay within Indian borders, **and he took careful steps to seek cessions without alienating tribal leaders. In assessing his priorities he,** like his Federalist predecessors, put

the placation of Indians ahead of territorial gain.

Although he needed to obtain millions of acres of Indian land along the Mississippi River, Jefferson realized that too much pressure of tribesmen would drive them into the arms of British and Spanish agents. Therefore he enlarged upon past Federalist Indian policy by building a system of government trading posts to **supply the strategic tribes with** implements and goods previously furnished by the European powers.

After the Treaty of San Lorenzo of 1795 placed the majority of tribal villages within the boundaries of the United States, Spain slowly lost influence among the tribesmen. The Trade and Intercourse Act of 1802 officially made the Jeffersonian Indian policy one of placation through trade. It also made Indian trade with foreign countries and firms illegal unless licensed by the United States.

Choctaw tribal leaders agreed to all aspects of the plan except one - they offered land along the thirty-first parallel, the boundary between the United States and West Florida, rather than on the Mississippi. Local American officials acting as commissioners accepted and signed the Treaty of Mount Dexter of November 16, 1805. Thomas Jefferson, however, rejected the treaty which did not meet his need for land between Natchez and the Chicasaw Bluffs. Rather than grab any and all land offered, Jefferson preferred to withhold the treaty from Senate consideration and try at a later date to acquire the river strip for his yeoman militia.

West Florida and the Mobile River figured prominently in Jeffersonian foreign policy. In fact, Jefferson had sought only the purchase of New Orleans and West Florida from Napoleon rather than the immense Louisiana Territory, and it was the hint of West Florida's inclusion in the purchase that gave rise to Jeffersonian efforts to claim that Gulf region. Depending on the rivers for trade routes were an isolated, but vocal, group of settlers centered about the

confluence of the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers. The Bigbeans, as they were called, found themselves separated from Spanish supplies and authorities at Mobile when the Treaty of San Lorenzo made them the subjects of the United States. Caught between American claims for West Florida and Spanish efforts to reassert dominance of the region, the Bigbeans were subjected to exorbitant Spanish **duties that raised the price of imported** goods by four hundred percent. Jefferson and the Congress were soon deluged with petitions for relief and demands for the ejection of the Spaniards.

Bits and pieces of Spanish West Florida began to fall to American-inspired insurrectionists who were further emboldened by the Peninsular War in Spain. Realizing that the port of New Orleans was especially vulnerable to attack, Jefferson dusted off the Treaty of Mount Dexter in January 1808, within weeks of the passage of the Embargo Act.

The Jeffersonian policy worked well. The Choctaw remained friendly to the United States during the War of 1812 and Creek War. The Americans won the economic battle for the southern tribes. Spain and England lost. Also it was across lands acquired in the Treaty of Mount Dexter that Andrew Jackson sped along a post road to the militia defense of New Orleans later in 1814.

Before the ratification of the Treaty, there had been some small increase in the number of settlers moving into the southern portion of the Mississippi Territory. After it was ratified, the yeomanry immigrated at an overwhelming rate. After the War of 1812 federal officials did little to appease the southern tribes. Indeed, all treaties signed after that time were to some degree coercive, as were the major cessions of Choctaw lands at the Treaty of Doak's Stand in 1820 and the infamous treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830.

From Wells, Samuel J., "International Causes of the Treaty of Mount Dexter, 1805, *Journal of Mississippi History*, Aug. 1986, pp. 177-185.



## THE INCORPORATION OF SHIELDSBORO

*Following is the Act of the 1818 Mississippi Legislature incorporating the town of Shieldsboro, known by that name from 1802 until 1875 when it was re-named Bay St. Louis. However, as early as 1699, settlers on the Bay of St. Louis, named by Bienville, referred to the area as Bay St. Louis.*

*There was considerable conflict between the American settlers who wanted the town's name to be Shieldsboro and the older French residents who continued to use the name Bay St. Louis.*

*As evidenced by the Act of the Legislature, the Americans prevailed.*

To establish and incorporate the Town of Shieldsborough.

Sec. 1. *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi in General Assembly convened,* That the place situated on the West side of the Bay St. Louis, in the county of Hancock, known by the name of Shieldsborough, is hereby declared to be a town, under the name of Shieldsboro and it shall be the duty of the owners thereof, to deposit in the clerk's office of the county court of the county aforesaid, within six months after the passage of this act, a plat of said town.

Sec. 2. *And be it further enacted,* That the town of Shieldsborough be, and the same is hereby incorporated, and the citizens of said town are hereby authorized, on the first Monday of April, annually, at the court house in said town, to vote for five persons, inhabitants of said town, as trustees; a majority of whom shall constitute a quorum to do business: also a town treasurer, assessor and collector, to serve for the term of one year: which said election shall be superintended by a justice of the peace, and shall commence at ten o'clock in the forenoon. and close at three o'clock in the afternoon of the same day.

Sec. 3. *And be it further enacted,* That the said trustees shall be a body corporate and politic, by the name and style of the Trustees of the town of Shieldsborough, and as such, they and their successors shall be capable, in law, of suing and being sued, of pleading and being impleaded, defend and defended, in all manner of suits and actions, in either law or equity; and also, to do all acts which are incident to bodies corporate and politic.

Sec. 4. *And be it further enacted,* That

a majority of said trustees, at their first and any subsequent meeting, in each and every year, have power and authority, to raise such sum or sums of money, as they shall think necessary for the well regulation of such town; which sum or sums shall be assessed upon the land holders, freeholders and householders within the said town. by the assessor, according to the regulations to be established by the trustees, and collected by the collector, by such a time, and be paid and disposed of in such a manner, as the said trustees shall provide; provided such sum shall not, in any one year, exceed one half of the amount directed by law to be collected as a state tax, on persons and property within said town; but if that sum be insufficient to answer the purpose of well regulating the said town, it shall be lawful for a majority of said trustees to call a meeting of the landholders, freeholders and householders of said town, by giving five days previous notice of such meeting, and the said landholders, freeholders and householders, by a majority of votes, may order and direct, that a further sum be raised, as to them may appear expedient; which further sum or sums shall be assessed, collected and paid, as shall be directed by said trustees.

Sec. 5. *And be it further enacted,* That all free white male inhabitants, subject to taxation, who shall be in the occupancy of a room or rooms, separate and apart to himself, shall be deemed a householder, within the meaning of this act, and shall be entitled to vote at the town elections.

Sec. 6. *And be it further enacted,* That the said trustees shall meet, on their own adjournment, and have power, from time to time, to make such laws and regulations, in writing, ad to them may appear expedient, for the well regulation and good government of said town; provided such laws and regulations be not inconsistent with the laws of this state: they shall also have power, and they are hereby authorized, to impose reasonable fines against and upon all persons who shall offend against the laws and regulations made by the trustees, and all such fines to demand and recover, before any justice of the peace, or court of record, having jurisdiction of such sums.

Sec. 7. *And be it further enacted,* That

in case of death, resignation or removal from town, of any of the trustees, that then the citizens shall have authority to elect such persons as they may think proper, to fill the vacancy, at such time and place as the balance of said trustees may appoint, by advertisement at the court house, and such other public places, within said towns, as they may think proper.

THO. BARNES,  
*Speaker of the House*  
D. STEWART,  
*Lieutenant Governor and*  
*President of the Senate.*

Approved, 6th day of February, 1818.

DAVID HOLMES,  
*Governor, Mississippi*

### NEW MEMBERS

Barbara Thomas, Pearlinton, MS  
George Thomas, Pearlinton, MS  
Carla Bayard, Diamondhead, MS  
Capt. Jack Evans, Diamondhead, MS  
Laverne Evans, Diamondhead, MS  
Liston Gardebled, Ruston, LA  
Stephen Englerth, Waveland, MS  
Mary Bordages Ladner, BSL, MS

### LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MONDAY	8 a.m.
through	to
FRIDAY	4 p.m.

THE

## HISTORIAN

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## *In Memory*

Donations to the Hancock County Historical Society Permanent Fund made *In Memory* or *In Honor* are acknowledged with a lovely card. Interest from the Permanent Fund is used to maintain the Kate Lobrano House and insure the perpetuation of the Society. If you are interested in making a donation, call the office for details.

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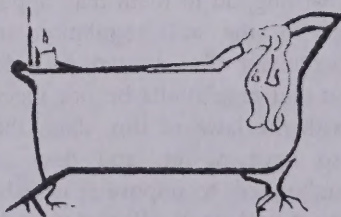
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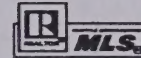
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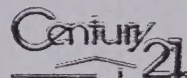
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
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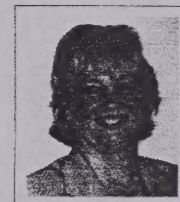
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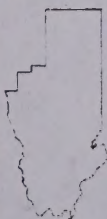
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